

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Water Rights Bureau

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

**Part I. Proposed Action Description**

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: USA (Dept of Interior BLM)  
5001 Southgate Dr  
Billings, MT 59101-4669
2. Type of action: Change Application for Additional Stock Tanks 39E 30159574
3. Water source name: Groundwater, Well
4. Location affected by project: Section 11, 13, and 15, T3S, R56E, Carter County
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

Groundwater Certificate 39E 56604-00 is for stock and wildlife/waterfowl use from a well located in Govt Lot 4 in the NWNW Section 3, T3S, R56E, Carter County. This well is connected to a pipeline system which supplies water to stock tanks. The Applicant proposes to add 3 stock tanks to water right 39E 56604-00 through this change application. Float/shut off valves will be used to control flow to the tanks. The stock watering system distributes livestock across the landscape to improve grazing management. The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

The places of use are listed in the table below:

	<b>Quarter Sections</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>
1	NWNESW	15	3S	56E
2	SWNESE	18	3S	57E
3	SWSESE	17	3S	57E
4	NWSESE (new POU)	11	3S	56E
5	SWSENE (new POU)	13	3S	56E
6	SENENW (new POU)	15	3S	56E

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

## **Part II. Environmental Review**

### **1. Environmental Impact Checklist:**

<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>
-----------------------------

#### **WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION**

**Water quantity** – The water source is a well that has been in use since 1966. The proposed use will not increase the flow rate or volume of water already appropriated through Groundwater Certificate 39E 56604-00 and will have no effect on water quantity.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Water quality** –The proposed plan to add stock tanks will not impair groundwater quality.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Groundwater** – The addition of stock tanks to this existing use of a well will not have an impact on groundwater. The herd size will not increase under the proposed change. Neither the flow rate nor the volume will increase. There will be no change in the rate or timing of stock use. Only the place of use will change due to the addition of stock tanks. Water will be conveyed to the additional stock tanks through a pipeline so there will be no conveyance losses. The Applicant proposes to equip each stock tank with float/shut-off valves to control flow to the tanks.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**DIVERSION WORKS** - The system consists of a well, completed in 1966, and a pipeline system connected to system consists of a well, completed in 1966, and a pipeline system connected to 6 stock tanks on BLM property. The system is referred to as the Keith Pipeline BLM Project 7961. Extension A of the pipeline was completed in 1982. Extension B was completed in 1984. From the well, water is pumped at a rate of 5 GPM into the pipeline system for stock use. The system utilizes a 1 HP pump, 30-50 PSI pressure tank, 1.25" PVC pipe, air valves, and a pressure reducer to prevent fluctuations. According to the Applicant, 5 GPM adequately serves the entire pipeline system which has operated well over the years using this flow rate. The pipeline system consists of approximately 8 miles of pipeline as measured in GIS. All tanks have a float system installed at the hydrant to preserve water when it is not being utilized. The tanks provide water to three pastures grazed in rotation from January 1 to December 31. The first pasture to the west is served by two tanks in Section 15 and one in Section 11. The second pasture is supplied by the tank in Section 13. The third pasture is supplied by a tank in Section 18 and a tank in Section 17. Only one pasture is used for grazing and watering at a time. The pipeline system is already constructed and operational supporting that the means of diversion is adequate.

*Determination:* No significant impact

## **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**Endangered and threatened species** – According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program, there are 4 animal species of concern in the proposed project area. Animal species of concern include Greater Sage Grouse, Ferruginous Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, and Long-legged Myotis. The Montana Natural Heritage Program does not indicate any plant species of concern in the project area. According to the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Map, this project is within core sage grouse habitat. The project is consistent with the Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy according to a letter from Therese Hartman, Program Manager, dated December 8, 2022. The proposed project is consistent with the current stock use of land in the area and is not likely to impact threatened or endangered species or create barriers to migration or movement of fish or wildlife.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Wetlands** –The additional stock tanks for this project are not located within the areas identified as wetlands by US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**Ponds** – There are no ponds associated with the proposed project.

*Determination:* No impact

**GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE** – This stock watering system covers a broad area in T3S, R56E and T3S, R57E, Carter County. The system consists of approximately 8 miles of pipeline and 6 stock tanks. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, there is a wide range of soil types in the project area including Gerdrum-Absher complex, Carfall-Assinniboine complex, Chinook-Assinniboine complex, and Chinook sandy loam, and other loams and clays. The addition of stock tanks on these soils is unlikely to cause significant impact on soil quality or stability.

*Determination:* No significant impact.

**VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS** – Existing vegetative cover in the area is rangeland. The addition of stock tanks will improve range management. The installation of pipelines and tanks may contribute to the establishment and spread of noxious weeds. It is the responsibility of the property owner to monitor for and implement measures for noxious weed control.

*Determination:* No significant impact

**AIR QUALITY** – The use of water from a well for stock purposes will not impact air quality.

*Determination:* No impact

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES** –According to information provided by BLM Archaeologist, Courtney Carlson, a cultural resource inventory report was completed in 1982 for the Keith Pipeline Extension project and the project area was surveyed for historical, geological, and archaeological values. BLM determined that there would be no historic properties affected as a result of the proposed action.

*Determination:* No impact

**DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY** - No additional demands on environmental resources are recognized.

*Determination:* No impact

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

**LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS** – There are no known locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

*Determination:* Not applicable

**ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES** – The proposed project is located on property owned by the BLM that has historically been used for grazing purposes. The project will not impact access to recreational or wilderness activities.

*Determination:* No impact

**HUMAN HEALTH** – No impacts to human health have been identified for the proposed addition of stock tanks to an existing stock water right on a well.

*Determination:* No impact

**PRIVATE PROPERTY** - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes\_\_\_ No\_**x**\_\_\_ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

*Determination:* No impact

**OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

*Impacts on:*

(a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No significant impact

(b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No significant impact

- (c) Existing land uses? No significant impact
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No significant impact
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No significant impact
- (f) Demands for government services? No significant impact
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No significant impact
- (h) Utilities? No significant impact
- (i) Transportation? No significant impact
- (j) Safety? No significant impact
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No significant impact

**2. *Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts are recognized

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts are recognized

**3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None

**4. *Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** The alternative to the proposed project is the no action alternative. The no action alternative prevents the property owner from improving efficiency of the watering system and improving range management practices. The no action alternative does not prevent or mitigate any significant environmental impacts.

***PART III. Conclusion***

**1. *Preferred Alternative:*** Issue the change authorization if the applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

**2 *Comments and Responses:*** None

**3. *Finding:***

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_x\_ *Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

There are no significant impacts associated with the project so an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

*Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:*

*Name:* Jill Lippard  
*Title:* Water Resource Specialist  
*Date:* 4/17/2023